(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) the time by which the banks are likely to provide above assistance; and

(d) the number of farmers likely to be benefited through this assistance?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI SATPAL MAHARAJ): (a) to (d) Development of fisheries in all its aspects from fish catching to the stage of export, financing of equipment necessary for fishing, rehabilitation of tanks, fish breeding, etc. are considered as activities allied to agriculture.Therefore, short term as well as term loans granted by commercial banks for these activities are treated as direct finance to agriculture and hence form a part of priority sector advances. As per extant instructions issued by Reserve Bank of India (RBI), scheduled commercial banks both in the public and private sector are required to provide 18% of their net bank credit to the agriculture sector. Further, National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD) provides refinance assistance to commercial banks, regional rural banks and cooperative institutions for supporting marine, inland and brackish water fisheries schemes in the country.The total refinance assistance from NABARD, during the year 1996-97, amounted to Rs.40.59 crores involving approximately over 10,000 physical units.

Sales Tax

2822. SHRI T. GOVINDAN: Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Government have taken any decision on the request of Kerala Government to give power to levy Sales Tax on Sugar, Textiles and Tobacco which was surrendered to the Centre has only under a contractual agreement so that State Government can raise revenue thrice the amount they currently receive from the centre, on this account; and

(b) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI SATPAL MAHARAJ): (a) and (b) No such proposal is under consideration of the Government at present.

India Development Forum

2823. SHRI T. GOPAL KRISHNA: Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) the external assistance India is likely to get as assured at the India Development Forum meeting held in Paris recently; and

(b) the purpose for which the assistance is proposed to be utilised?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI SATPAL MAHARAJ): (a) The total pledges of Official Development Assistance made by multilateral and bilateral donors in India Development Forum Meeting held on 23rd and 24th June, 1997 in Paris was US $6.74 billion.

(b) At the India Development Forum Meeting the donor countries offer assistance in terms of overall pledges. The details of external assistance by foreign countries/ institutions and terms and conditions are known only after the aid negotiations/agreements with donor countries/ institutions are finalised.

Withdrawal of Turban from Sikh Class IV Employees of LIC

2824. SHRI SATYA PAL JAIN: Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Government of India is aware that Sikh Class IV employees of the LIC of India used to get "Turban" as a part of their uniform;

(b) whether the same i.e. Turban has now been withdrawn from the uniform of the Sikh Class IV employees of the LIC of India; and

(c) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI SATPAL MAHARAJ): (a) to (c) The information is being collected and will be laid on the Table of the House.

[Translation]

Export of Onion

2825. SHRI ANAND RATNA MAURYA:

SHRI BRIJ BHUSHAN TIWARI:

Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether there has been a heavy decline in the export of onion from the country;

(b) if so, the reasons therefor;

(c) the names of the countries to which India is exporting onion;

(d) whether the Government have formulated any ambitious scheme to increase, the export of onion;

(e) if so, the details thereof; and

(f) the foreign exchange earned from the export of vegetables during each of the last three years?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE (DR. BOLLA BULLI RAMAIAH): (a) and (b) No, Sir. The exports of onions which were valued at Rs. 90.88 crores in 1990-91 have risen to Rs. 271.16 crores in 1996-97.

(c) India has been exporting onions mainly to Bahrain, Brunei, Bangladesh, Japan, Kuwait, Mali, Malaysia, Maldives, Mauritius, Nepal, Netherlands, Oman, Pakistan,